



NEWS

**For Immediate Release
February 20, 2003**

**Draft Environmental Assessment Document for Naturita, Colorado,
UMTRA Ground Water Project Site Available for Public Comment**

(Grand Junction, CO)—The U.S. Department of Energy Grand Junction Office (DOE–GJO) announces the availability of the draft *Environmental Assessment of Ground Water Compliance at the Naturita, Colorado, UMTRA Project Site*. The draft *Environmental Assessment* provides information concerning the potential effects of the proposed ground-water compliance strategy for the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Ground Water Project site at Naturita.

The Naturita UMTRA Ground Water Project site is a former uranium and vanadium ore-processing facility located in western Colorado about 2 miles northwest of the city of Naturita, in Montrose County. The site is situated on an elongated north-south section of floodplain bounded by the San Miguel River on the east and Highway 141 on the west. The current site area is 79 acres; the City of Naturita owns the central portion of the site and Chemetall Foote Corporation, a German company, owns the northern and southern portions of the site. DOE–GJO in Grand Junction, Colorado, manages the UMTRA Ground Water Project.

Most soils and sediments contaminated by milling related materials were removed during the surface remedial action completed in 1998. This action removed the vast majority of the source material that contributed to ground water contamination. Uranium and vanadium are the only contaminants remaining in the ground water that require more than 100 years before concentrations would be reduced to levels that are not harmful to people and the environment. However, no one or no thing is currently being harmed or is anticipated to be harmed by the uranium and vanadium remaining in ground water.

Therefore, a compliance strategy is being proposed of no further remedial action of the ground water with the application of alternate concentration limits for uranium and vanadium. Alternate

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concentration limits allow DOE to set contaminant levels to a value that will be protective of people and animals in locations where the ground water might surface. Ground water contamination could surface in the millsite area anywhere along the San Miguel River, but it would rapidly mix with river water and be diminished to levels far below any risk-based values. This compliance strategy will be implemented in conjunction with institutional controls to limit ground water use. Ground water samples will continue to be collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the strategy.

Reference copies of the draft *Environmental Assessment* will be placed in the Naturita Public Library in Naturita, the Montrose Public Library in Montrose, the Nucla Public Library in Nucla, the Mesa County Public Library in Grand Junction, and the DOE–GJO Public Reading Room in Grand Junction by February 24, 2003. Copies may be requested by contacting DOE–GJO toll-free at 1–800–399–5618.

DOE will discuss and invite comments on the draft *Environmental Assessment* at the Montrose County Commissioner meeting on Wednesday, March 12, 2003, at the Nucla Town Hall, 320 Main Street, Nucla. The commissioner's meeting begins at 10:30 a.m. DOE will also host a public meeting on March 12 at 6:00 pm at the Naturita Community Building, 411 West 2nd Street, Naturita.

Any public comments on the draft *Environmental Assessment* should be forwarded to the address below no later than March 24, 2003:

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